

GARHWAL PAINTING

MUKANDI LAL

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To my Guru

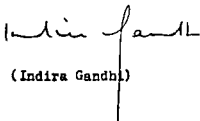
DR. ANANDA K. COOMARASWAMY



प्रधान मंत्री भवन
PRIME MINISTER'S HOUSE
NEW DELHI

Between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries many painters of remarkable talent flourished in the courts of the Himalayan hills. They were masters of the miniature and fond of the Krishna legends. They were also called upon to do portraits. Their work is marked by lyricism, sophistication and an exquisite sense of colour and line.

Shri Mukandi Lal is a well-known authority on Pahari paintings. I am sure that students of art everywhere will welcome this album of the Garhwal School which he has so ably edited.


(Indira Gandhi)

New Delhi.
February 21, 1968

PREFACE

Shri Mukandi Lal deserves congratulations of all art-lovers for the pains he has taken in preparing this monograph on Garhwal paintings. It is the result of life-long research and is certainly a valuable contribution to the literature on Pahari paintings. Shri Mukandi Lal studied many manuscripts and paintings which were preserved by the descendants of some artists and produced this fascinating and admirable book. I am glad the Publications Division of the Government of India has undertaken its publication.

Like the Mughal, the Rajasthani and the Kangra Schools, the Garhwal School, too, has its own peculiar characteristics. The author has given the historical background, motifs and themes of this school of painting. He has also written notes on individual colour plates.

Apart from the paintings on mythological subjects, *Avatars* and *Nayikas*, twelve paintings illustrating the marriage of Rukmini with Shri Krishna are a unique feature of the Garhwal paintings.

The Pahari miniature paintings were first discovered by Moorcraft in 1820 in Kangra. The beauty and importance of Pahari paintings was brought to the notice of all the lovers of Indian art by Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy in his famous book *Rajput Painting* in 1916. The present publication demonstrates the beauty, importance and history of the Garhwal School.

I congratulate the author on his devotion and dedication to the work he has undertaken.

B. GOPALA REDDI

Raj Bhavan,
Lucknow.
March 21, 1968.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It would not have been possible for me to reconstruct this brief history of the Garhwal school of painting if Balak Ram (1867-1956) had not preserved the works of his ancestors and the writings of his great-grandfather Mola Ram (1743-1833). I owe Balak Ram a great debt of gratitude for making available to me all the materials he had. I am also indebted to his cousin and my boyhood friend, Tulsi Ram (1881-1950), for supplying me with some valuable material. I am grateful to the Editors of *Roopa-Lekha* and the late Barada Ukil for originally asking me to write on Garhwal painting serially. Finally, I am highly indebted to the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for undertaking this publication. I am also grateful to Dr. M. S. Randhawa for his suggestions.

Mukandi Lal

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HISTORY OF THE GARHWAL SCHOOL OF PAINTING

THE Garhwal school of painting is the most prolific Pahari (Hill) school of Rajput painting. Its foundation was laid, in Garhwal, as far back as 1658; but it was not known outside until it was discovered by the present writer in 1908. The founders of the Garhwal school, Sham Das and Har Das, father and son,¹ came to the court of Raja Prithipat Shah (1625-1660)² at Srinagar³ (Black & White painting 1), then capital of Garhwal State. They arrived in May 1658 in the company of the refugee prince Suleman Shikoh, son of Aurangzeb's brother Dara. Sham Das and Har Das belonged to the Shahjahan school of Mughal painting. In the fourth generation was born Mola Ram (1743-1833) (B. & W. 2), the greatest artist of the Garhwal school. His descendants still live in Srinagar (Garhwal).

The Garhwal school of painting, like the other Pahari schools of Guler, Kangra, Chamba, Basohli, Jammu and Mandi, is one of the off-shoots of the Rajput school. Like the other Pahari schools, the Garhwal school sprang up when artists from Rajputana, Agra and Delhi migrated to the courts of the Hill rulers as invitees or as refugees, and were given patronage.

Suleman Shikoh, son of Aurangzeb's brother Dara, on his way to join his father in Lahore, wanted to travel through the Punjab Hills *via* Garhwal. In order to avoid encounter with Aurangzeb's forces in the plains, he came from Allahabad to Nagina, which is in the foothills of the Garhwal region. From Nagina he came to Srinagar, in May 1658, with seventeen courtiers and servants. In the party were the court artists Sham Das and Har Das. When Aurangzeb came to know of Suleman's escape to Garhwal, he compelled the Raja, under threat of war, to surrender Suleman Shikoh.

After one year and seven months' sojourn at Srinagar, where he was lodged in a palace and treated "like a son" by the old Raja, Prithipat Shah (1625-1660), the prince was surrendered to the forces of Aurangzeb under a false pretext. He was sent to the battlefield of Patalidun at the head of an army of Garhwal soldiers. The pretence of fighting against Aurangzeb's forces was contrived by the crafty heir-apparent of Garhwal, Medini Shah (1660-1684). Medini Shah was *persona grata* at Aurangzeb's court in Delhi. With his Garhwal soldiers he helped Aurangzeb to subdue some of the refractory Rajas of the Punjab Hills.

¹Genealogy: Sham Das—Har Das—Hira Lal—Mangat Ram—Mola Ram—Jwala Ram—Tej Ram—Balak Ram—Baij Nath

²Wherever the exact period is given after the name of a ruler of Garhwal, it indicates the period of reign

³Srinagar of Garhwal, in Uttar Pradesh, is not to be confused with Srinagar of Kashmir. Srinagar of Garhwal District (known as Uttarakhand) was the old capital of Garhwal Rajas. It is situated on the left bank of the Alaknanda river, the principal tributary of the Ganga. It is one hundred miles from Haridwar in the south, and about the same distance from the shrine of Badrinath in the north. The old city of Srinagar (B. & W. 1) was washed away in 1894 by the overflow from the Gohna Lake. Soon after, a new town of the same name was built on a higher level and the inhabitants of the devastated city resettled there. Old Srinagar was the centre of the Garhwal school of painting, and happens to be the writer's home town.

Though Suleman Shikoh was surrendered to Aurangzeb, Sham Das and Har Das were detained by the Raja of Garhwal in his court in Srinagar. Mola Ram writes in his manuscript of the history of Garhwal raj that the Raja treated Sham Das and Har Das like his ministers. It was after the arrival of the two artists from the Mughal court that Raja Prithipat Shah created the office of *tasbirdar* (picture-maker).

Painting flourished vigorously in Garhwal for two hundred years, particularly in Mola Ram's lifetime (1743-1833). The last batch of the known Garhwal artists were two sons of Mola Ram—Jwala Ram (1788-1848) and Shib Ram (1790-1855), and two great-grandsons of Mola Ram—Hari Ram (1858-1906) and Tulsi Ram (1881-1950). However, Jwala Ram was the last notable artist of the Garhwal school. The works of the sons of Mola Ram demonstrate not only the decline of Pahari art; they also reflect the European influence which had set in by the middle of the 19th century. Shib Ram's painting of Suleman Shikoh (B. & W. 3), Jwala Ram's paintings and drawings of birds and towns and Tulsi Ram's landscapes bear evidence of European influence.

The cause of the decline and death of the Garhwal school of painting was the absence of patronage. Mola Ram and his ancestors received a *jagir* of sixty villages and a daily allowance of five rupees from the Rajas of Garhwal. This patronage was continued by the Gurkha rulers of Garhwal (1803-1815). But when they were defeated and the British Government took over Garhwal, the *jagir* was cancelled and the daily allowance to the artist's family was discontinued. Instead, Jwala Ram, the son of Mola Ram, was appointed clerk to Sir Henry Ramsay, the first British Commissioner of Garhwal and Kumaon. The other descendants of Mola Ram became goldsmiths. Thus the art of painting gradually disappeared from the family.

Another significant cause of the decline of the Garhwal school was that the artists, like other specialists and artisans in India, were reluctant to pass on the vital secrets of their art even to their descendants. This tendency was even more marked in the case of pupils. As a result, certain important techniques of the school were lost.

In the case of the Garhwal school, there is another rather strange factor to consider. It so happened that some of Mola Ram's descendants who followed the family profession of painting became insane. The supposed connection of insanity with the art of painting thus became another deterrent to his descendants.

Till the present writer discovered numerous signed and dated paintings by artists of Garhwal, it was not widely known that such a distinctive school of painting ever existed. Several Garhwal paintings went to the courts of various hill rulers along with the princesses of Garhwal when they got married. These paintings used to be ascribed to Kangra and other Pahari schools.

Some writers are of the view that Tehri was the home of the Garhwal school. Actually Tehri was not even in existence until 1818. When the last Raja of Garhwal, Pradyuman Shah (1785-1804), was driven out of Srinagar by the Gurkha invaders, and when in turn the Gurkhas were expelled with the aid of British forces in 1815, Garhwal was divided into two administrative units. One of these units, which included Srinagar, was kept by the British Government, while the other half was given to Sudarshan Shah (1804-1859), son of Pradyuman Shah. He selected Tehri as his capital for strategic reasons, since it is a small delta between two rivers (the Bhilangana and the Bhagirathi) and is surrounded by high hills. At that time there were only a few huts of fishermen and ferrymen at Tehri. It was only in 1818 that houses were built for the royal family,

the courtiers and their dependents at the confluence of the rivers Bhilangana and Bhagirathi. The new settlement acquired the name Tehri from the nearby village of Tipri which still exists. From then on the township began to grow.

Raja Sudarshan Shah's uncle, Kunwar Pritam Shah, had to go all the way to Srinagar, a distance of 30 miles, to continue his lessons in painting. Pritam Shah once complained to his teacher Mola Ram: "I have been coming to my master's door at Srinagar so often; my legs are tired with the coming and going; and still my master has not taught me all I want to learn." There were no artists at Tehri. Mola Ram, for personal reasons, refused to go there. Hence it is clear that all the paintings of the Garhwal school were actually painted in Srinagar.

The Tehri rulers, Raja Sudarshan Shah (1804-1859) and his grandson Pratap Shah (1872-1886), married princesses from Kangra, Guler, Suket and Mandi States. It is possible that paintings from Kangra, Guler, Mandi and Suket came to Tehri-Garhwal with the Ranis. But that does not entitle us to talk of the art of Tehri-Garhwal or of the court painters of Tehri. As has been stated, Tehri was founded in 1818, after which date no great Pahari artist was born.

The first authoritative reference to the Garhwal school was made by Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy in 1916, in his work on Rajput painting. "Scarcely to be differentiated from the late Kangra art and probably that of intermediate States such as Patiala, is the local school of Garhwal, which happens to be rather well known owing to the fact that there have come into the market a number of paintings by or attributed to Mola Ram, together with a miscellaneous collection of earlier and later drawings."¹

In 1930 Mr. J. C. French visited Kangra and other centres of Pahari art. He paid me a visit at Lansdowne in Garhwal. He saw my collection, and took the trouble of going all the way to Srinagar. He met both Balak Ram and Tulsi Ram, two of the three living great-grandsons of Mola Ram, who showed him specimens of the work of their forefathers. Mr. French wrote: "Design, subject and execution all point strongly to the influence of Kangra. But in the flow of the line and the general atmosphere there is a certain difference. The lyrical feeling and fluency so characteristic of the Kangra Valley line are present here also; but there is an absence of the extraordinary lightness and brightness which is one of the glories of the Kangra art. There is a slightly heavier and more reflective, indeed one might even say, more sombre atmosphere ... and this is characteristic of Mola Ram and the whole Garhwal school. The flowers of the Garhwal school have an extraordinary charm and grace, and there is delicacy and freshness about the colouring which it is impossible to reproduce."²

Mr. W. G. Archer, in the introduction to his monograph on Garhwal painting has acknowledged that "there matured at Garhwal a style of painting only equalled in romantic charm by that of another Punjab Hill State, Kangra," and that "Garhwal had made one of the greatest contributions to Indian painting." According to Mr. Archer, "At Garhwal the style is so authentic and individual that while there is certainly a marked affinity with Kangra art, the sense of any close dependence is wanting. It is rather as parallel developments from the same artistic source that the two styles must be regarded."³ Mr. Archer attributes the origin of the Garhwal school to Guler. He says: "Although there is no exact or final proof, a number of circumstances suggest that certain artists

¹From the *Mss. of the history of Garhwal raj*, written in verse by Mola Ram

²*Rajput Painting*, Vol. I, by Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy, p. 23

³*Himalayan Art*, pp. 58, 63

⁴*Garhwal Painting*, Introduction by W. G. Archer, pp. 2-3

went to Garhwal from Guler]. . . Guler people went to Garhwal with the bride. . . It is not improbable, then, that certain Guler artists attached themselves to the wedding party and remained at Garhwal when the rest of the party had returned." It is possible Mr. Archer might have mistaken Pradyuman Shah of Garhwal (1785-1804) for his great-grandson Pratap Shah (1872-1886), for whom a Guleria bride was brought from a remote village in Mandi State. There is no evidence whatsoever of any artist of Guler or any other hill state coming to Garhwal.

Mola Ram painted in the Mughal style until he paid a visit to Kangra and came in contact with Kangra artists about 1763. Even according to Mr. Archer's surmise, Guler artists came to Garhwal about 1781. Mola Ram had visited Kangra much earlier, and had already painted in Kangra *qalam* (style) at least in 1769 and 1775 as is conclusively proved by the dated and signed paintings entitled "Consoling the Queen" (1769) (B. & W. 4) and *Morpriya* (1775). Hence it appears reasonable to assume that the Guler artists could have had no hand in the founding of the Garhwal school.

Another great student and connoisseur of Pahari painting, Mr. Ajit Ghose, has said of Garhwal painting: "For minuteness of decorative detail and for their love of beauty and natural scenery, the Garhwal painters excel all the other Rajput schools. In fact the greater number of Pahari paintings in which the landscape has been charmingly treated, especially those in which we find sprays of small pink or white flowers in bloom, may be safely assigned to Garhwal. . . . No paper on Rajput painting would be complete which did not pay a tribute to the work of Mola Ram, the greatest of the Garhwal artists. Undoubtedly, Mola Ram represents the best and most individualistic work of the Garhwal school."¹

The Persian and Hindu artists of the Mughal court evolved the Mughal school of painting which later, in the hills, gave birth to the Pahari schools.

During the days of Shahjahan and Aurangzeb, the Rajput princes had already assimilated much of the highly refined civilization of the Mughal court. When the Empire disintegrated, the Rajput princes became its cultural heirs. They took into their service the architects, masons, painters, weavers, jewellers, goldsmiths, musicians and dancing girls of the Mughals.

Some of the Rajput princes, who left their original homes in Rajputana and central India at one time or another, carved out kingdoms for themselves in the hills of northern India. They invited Hindu as well as Muslim artists from Rajput and Mughal courts in the 17th century. Some artists also migrated to the hills for want of patronage at the court of Aurangzeb and his successors. It appears that for a considerable time these artists, even in the hills, followed the technique and style of the Mughal school. So it was in Garhwal, from the middle of the 17th century right up to Mola Ram's time, about the middle of the 19th century.

Two old, slightly soiled, paintings of Garhwal in Mughal style were discovered by the author in 1949. They were preserved by Tulsi Ram who believed them to be either the work of Mola Ram or Mangat Ram or Hira Lal. One of the two paintings represents the toilet of a *begum* where she stands, drying her hair. The other is entitled *Manini* (B. & W. 7). The lady's pride has been hurt. Her *sakhi* (companion) is trying to appease her. She seems to be telling her, as it were, "Listen! do not go too far, in your anger, lest you lose the love of your beloved." The locale of the painting is indicated by the palaces of the Rajas at Srinagar in the background, on the right. It is a work in the Mughal style by an early artist of the Garhwal school.

¹Ajit Ghose, *Raspa-Lekha*, No. 2, April 1929

The drawing entitled *Mastani* (B. & W. 8), discovered by the present writer in 1936, is an excellent specimen of Mughal art. It shows a *begum* at her toilet, enjoying music and drink. This drawing, which is dated 1771 and is autographed by Mola Ram, conclusively proves that in the beginning Mola Ram himself painted in the Mughal style. He has clearly written in Hindi over the drawing that he, an artist, has drawn the picture of the *mastani* (a gay girl) to please himself, in 1771 A.D.

Another sketch entitled *Hindola* (swing) (B. & W. 9), drawn, described and signed by Mola Ram, is also in Mughal style. There are eleven women in the picture, in four groups, and a couple, husband and wife, on the swing. It is believed that the artist meant to depict Prince Salim (Jahangir) surrounded by musicians and maid servants.

In 1949 the writer came across another painting called "Falling from a Swing" in Mughal style which illustrates a Hindi poem of Bihari. Mola Ram, the painter of this erotic miniature, was then slowly shaking off the Mughal influence and changing over to the Pahari-Rajput *qalam*.

I have in my collection a painting showing the young Akbar at a village well (B. & W. 10). It is a copy of Colour Plate XIX. Balak Ram told me that he had seen his elder brother Hari Ram painting this picture (B. & W. 10). It was almost the last work of Hari Ram (1858-1906) before he became insane. It is a typical specimen of the art of the decadent period, just before the Garhwal school went into decline. Clearly, Mola Ram did not teach his sons and grandsons to prepare mineral colours for painting. The painting is inferior in both technique and drawing, and its colours are crude and coarse bazaar colours, not the colours that Pahari painters used to prepare themselves.

The conclusion which Dr. Hermann Goetz reached regarding the connection and interdependence of Rajput and Mughal art, and the documentary evidence discovered by me justify Professor Childe's observation, based on his socio-archaeological research, that "one society can borrow an idea, a technical invention, a political institution, a superstitious rite, or an artistic motive only when it fits into the general pattern of the society's culture; in other words, when that society has evolved to a stage which allows of the acceptance of the idea."¹ This explains how the artists who used to paint at the Mughal court in the Mughal style evolved the new Pahari style out of the older Rajput school which had existed in India even before Muslim contact. The artists who came to the Rajput courts in the hills adapted themselves to the new environment. The new Pahari style had better chances of survival and acceptance in the *durbars* of the Himalayan rulers. Thus the old Rajput art which merged into Mughal art again blossomed into Pahari art in the new styles of Garhwal, Guler and Kangra. The Garhwal school is a reaction, assimilation and culmination of Mughal art, an improvement. So are all the other Pahari schools—Kangra, Mandi, Guler and Jammu. The sole exception is the Basohli school, a branch of the early Rajput school, which remained in a Himalayan cave as it were, refusing to advance or assimilate, and died out at the end of the 18th century.

Mola Ram, who died in 1833, was the last great known master of Pahari art. The works of his sons, Jwala Ram (1788-1848) and Shib Ram (1790-1855), great-grandson Hari Ram (1858-1906) and great-grandson Tulsi Ram (1881-1950) are specimens of the decadent period of the Garhwal school. I have not yet come across any Pahari painting dated later than the middle of the nineteenth century which approaches in quality any of the fine works of the eighteenth century and of the first half of the nineteenth.

¹*Social Evolution* (1951), p. 172

ARTISTS OF THE GARHWAL SCHOOL

MOLA RAM does not describe himself as a painter (*mussavir* or *chitrakar*) in his writings. Invariably, and with a sense of pride, he describes himself as a poet.

Although I have been examining and collecting Mola Ram's drawings and paintings since 1909, it was only in 1936 that I came across a drawing, *Mastani* (B. & W. 8), where Mola Ram has written in his own hand that he was a *mussavir*. The verse reads in translation: "I, Mola Ram, poet and painter, have drawn this picture of *mastani* (a gay girl) to amuse myself. (Her movement and expression show) She is sitting, intoxicated, enjoying her food and drink. She is listening to music and looking at her companion, who is holding a cup of wine. She (*mastani*) is drinking cupfuls (of wine) and asking for more and more, again and again."

Mola Ram painted a portrait of the Chief Minister of Raja Lalit Shah, Jaidev Vazir (B. & W. 12), riding on a grey horse, accompanied by five attendants, one of whom is a *hukkabardar* (who prepares the tobacco pipe). In the verse written at the top of the painting, Mola Ram says that when he painted the picture the Vazir presented him with a shawl, a *pagri* (turban) and a hundred and one rupees.

The reason why Mola Ram preferred to call himself a poet rather than a painter is interesting. Most of the artists, particularly of the Rajput and Pahari schools, belonged to the *sunar* (goldsmith) caste. Unfortunately, in our country, artisans were assigned a low status in society. Even such a broad-minded and sagacious writer and statesman as Kautilya, the Brahmin Minister of Chandragupta (c. 322-c. 298 B.C.), placed painters in the category of pimps and jugglers. On the other hand, poets and writers were held in high esteem. It was natural, therefore, that artists should be reluctant to sign their own pictures. However great they might be as painters, sculptors or carvers, artists usually did not like to identify themselves with their own works of art lest they disclose their low-caste origins.

At least one member of the family of Mola Ram (Tulsi Ram) actually worked as a goldsmith until his death in 1950. The writer has in his collection some fine drawings and woodcuts of sword handles, sword covers and images of gods and goddesses which are ascribed to Mola Ram's father Mangat Ram. They were used by Mola Ram's descendants to make moulds or blocks for casting sword handles, sword covers, and metal images for sale to the pilgrims who passed Srinagar on the way to the holy mountain shrines of Kedarnath and Badrinath. But Mola Ram himself remained purely a writer and painter all his life. As already mentioned Mola Ram's elder son Jwala Ram (1788-1848) became a clerk to the British Commissioner, Sir Henry Ramsay, for want of patronage. He painted a few pictures, particularly of fauna, flora and landscapes and made sketches of mythological subjects. Mola Ram's second son, Shib Ram (1790-1855), took up the

profession of goldsmith but also painted occasionally. Some of his paintings have been found by Dr. M. S. Randhawa with the Raja of Nurpur.¹

There is conclusive evidence that Mola Ram was born in 1743 and not 1760, as I had inferred in my earlier writings.² The year of Mola Ram's death (1833) being well established, he decidedly lived for 90 years, which is not an uncommonly long age amongst the hill people.

Mola Ram's fame as an artist reached as far as Nepal. When the Gurkha Governor Hastidal Chautaria visited Srinagar in 1803, he told Mola Ram that he had heard of him at Kantipur in Nepal, and that he had been delighted to see his paintings. Among other visitors and admirers of Mola Ram, two deserve special mention. One was a Muslim artist, Baqir Ali Fardak, who insisted on staying with him "to learn the art of painting pictures of multifarious colours," and a savant, Mani Ram Bairagi, who first visited Srinagar in 1773 and came a second time in 1818. He told Mola Ram that he had come to see with his own eyes the art of which he had heard so much.

When the Garhwali Governor of Dehra Dun, which was at that time a part of Garhwal State, rose in rebellion and attacked Srinagar, Raja Jaikrit Shah (1780-1785) went to Mola Ram's *chitrashala* (studio) and asked him to go to Jagat Prakash, the Raja of Nahan, to seek his help. Mola Ram, instead of going himself to Nahan, drew a picture and composed an appropriate poem and sent them with a messenger, Dhani Ram, to Raja Jagat Prakash. The picture and the poem had the desired effect and the assistance did come: the rebellion was quelled.

Mola Ram said that he learnt the art of painting from his father, Mangat Ram. He must have learnt from his father the Mughal technique, which he followed and practised until he was about twenty-five years of age. This was when he visited Kangra where Sansar Chand (1763-1823) was the ruler. Mola Ram appears to have come under the influence of the masters of the Kangra *qalam* and adopted the Kangra style and motifs. In one of his manuscripts, he has mentioned that one of his *ustads* (teachers) was the "well-known Rai Singh, son of Munshi Bilochan," though he does not specify whether he learnt art or philosophy from him. Rai Singh might have been a Kangra artist whom Mola Ram came to adopt as his *guru* in the Pahari technique. There is a map of Kangra fort and its environs drawn by Mola Ram, which conclusively proves that he did indeed visit Kangra. The map referred to by Mola Ram in his history of the Garhwal rulers has been preserved by Balak Ram.

Among the well-known contemporaries of Mola Ram was Chaitu, whose signature appears on at least two paintings of the period, namely, "The Rape of the Yadava Women" and "Krishna Takes Toll".

Some of Chaitu's paintings were in the collection of the Maharaja of Tehri-Garhwal, some are in the collection of Brigadier Vidya Dhar Jayal, a few are in the P. C. Manuk Collection, now in London, and some are at the Bharat Kala Bhavan (Varanasi), Allahabad and Lucknow Museums and National Museum, New Delhi.

¹Randhawa, M. S., "Signed Paintings of Jwala Ram, Artist of Garhwal," *Roopa-Lekha*, Vol. XXXII, 2, 1961

²My earlier inference was based on a portrait on which was written "Painter Mola Ram, age 73". I presumed that he lived for 73 years, and worked out the year of his birth from the established date of his death, in 1833. Evidence which has later come to light shows that Mola Ram was aged 73 when he drew the portrait, not that he lived for 73 years. I shall not go into the details of the evidence here. Suffice it to say that *Afzansi* (B. & W. 8) drawn in 1771 (discovered in 1936) could not have been the work of a boy of 11; nor *the painting "Consoling the Queen"* (B. & W. 4), painted in 1769, be the work of a boy of nine years, if Mola Ram's year of birth was to be presumed as 1760; nor does Mola Ram as drawn by himself in the portrait (B. & W. 23) of Raja Lalit Shah (1772-1780) who died in 1780, look like a lad of 20.

Another well-known contemporary or pupil of Mola Ram was Manku. One of his paintings is "Hide and Seek" (B. & W. 13). The sketch of this work (B. & W. 14) was found by the author amongst the paintings and drawings of Mola Ram.

The paintings of the Garhwal school bear an unmistakable hallmark which is invariably found in the paintings of Mola Ram. The horizontal, curved *chandan tika* (sandal-paste mark) on the forehead of women of high status is peculiar to paintings of the Garhwal school. Wherever you find this *chandan* mark (not the small round *tika* or the perpendicular *tilak* but the horizontal, half-curved mark) on the forehead of women, the painting may be ascribed to the artists of the Garhwal school.

It was natural that almost all the Garhwal artists should live at Srinagar, it being the capital of the whole of Garhwal, and the town where the Raja lived. Up to as late as 1878, 45 years after the death of Mola Ram, there were five families of painters at Srinagar according to a contemporary writer. Only two of these families were descendants of Mola Ram. These two families are still living in the new Srinagar. There is no trace of the other three families of artists.

THEMES AND MOTIFS OF GARHWAL PAINTINGS

THE Garhwal school excels other Pahari schools in the treatment of women. Here they stand out more slender and charming; there is more detail in the depiction of ornaments; the drapery is often transparent and attractive. This particular gift of the artists of the Garhwal school is demonstrated in several of the paintings reproduced here.

THE NAYIKAS

The depiction of women according to their characteristics, feelings and erotic sentiments as given in *nayikabheda*¹ was very popular with painters of the Pahari schools, just as pictures of *Baramasa* ("The Twelve Months") and *Ragamala* (garland of melodies) were popular themes of the Rajasthani painters. Pahari artists drew their inspiration for painting lovely women, as *nayikas*, from the Hindi poets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, such as Keshav Das, Bihari, Mati Ram, Rahim, Raskhan and Nagari Das.

Mola Ram has himself described the *Abhisarika nayika* he painted in a verse which he has written on the top of the painting. The original drawing of this *Abhisarika* has also been discovered.

A set of *Ashta-nayika* (eight heroines) painted by Mola Ram was in the collection of Maharaja Narendra Shah of Tehri-Garhwal. Some *nayika* paintings are reproduced here.

A drawing of *Vipralabdha nayika* by Mola Ram has also been discovered. It carries a descriptive verse giving the characteristics of the *Vipralabdha*. A colour plate (No. XV) of a very beautiful *Vipralabdha nayika* which is obviously based on the drawing is reproduced here. She stands on a bed of green leaves under a beautiful green tree. In front is another green tree adorned with spikes of pinkish flowers of the *mandar*, a favourite motif of Mola Ram and of the Garhwal school as a whole. The flowering *mandar* is common in Garhwal. The *nayika* wears an orange *dupatta* studded with golden stars and with a golden border. Her lovely arms and hands, her arched, swan-like neck and heaving bosom are drawn exquisitely. The ornaments are drawn so realistically

¹Women as *nayikas* are classified in ten categories by Hindi poets under *nayikabheda*. This classification is based on classical Sanskrit works on the *rasas*.

- (i) *Vasakasajja* (one who sits, dressed up, waiting to meet her lover).
- (ii) *Utkanthita* (one who is distressed by separation).
- (iii) *Svadhinapatika* (one who dominates her lover).
- (iv) *Kalahantarita* (one who is separated from her lover by a quarrel).
- (v) *Khandita* (one who is enraged with her lover).
- (vi) *Vipralabdha* (one who goes to the tryst and is distressed at not finding her lover there).
- (vii) *Proshritpatika* (one whose husband is away on a sojourn).
- (viii) *Abhisarika* (one who is on her way to meet her lover).
- (ix) *Pravatsyatpatika* (one whose husband intends to go on a journey).
- (x) *Agatpatika* (one whose husband is returning home after a long absence in a foreign land).

that they can easily be identified. But the painting indicates that she did not care for her ornaments since her lover had not arrived at the rendezvous to admire them. She is depicted as throwing off her ornaments in disgust and disappointment.

The *nayikas* are typical specimens of the Garhwal school's conception of womanly beauty. In these pictures the artists have not only created charming women, but they have also drawn beautiful ornaments, trees and flowers. The *Vasakasajja nayika* by Mola Ram illustrates the most characteristic features of the sylvan setting of Garhwal paintings.

MYTHOLOGICAL THEMES

A significant painting by Mola Ram of a mythological theme is "The Temptation of Shiva" (Colour Plate XVI). The drawing is also reproduced (B. & W. 15). The flowering trees, the green meadow and lotuses are all there, so also is the *chandan tika* on Parvati's forehead. While Mahadev performs *tapasya* in the Himalayas, Parvati, who is bent on marrying him, goes there to seduce him with her beauty and music. He listens to her music; so does his *vahan* (mount) and constant companion, Nandi, the bull. It is evident from Shiva's face that he is not unmindful of Gauri's charm, though his upstanding hair indicates anger.

Govardhan Dharan (Colour Plate I) and *Kaliya Daman* (Colour Plate II) are among the favourite subjects of the artists of Kangra and Garhwal. Govardhan is painted against a dark background in an uncommon combination of colours—white, almond, pinkish-yellow, mauve, orange, coral-red and yellow. Krishna holds the Govardhan mountain on his little finger. Men, women and children, as well as the cows and calves of Vrindavan, take shelter under the mountain to escape the ire of the rain-god, Indra. They are all looking to Krishna for help and protection. Fear and supplication are apparent in their faces. This miniature, though small in size (9" x 9") is very well drawn and skilfully painted in superb colours. It creates the impression of a large fresco. It bears some traces of the Mughal style.

RADHA-KRISHNA LORE

The legend of Krishna and Radha and their love sport (*lila*) provided rich material to Pahari painters in general and to the artists of Garhwal in particular.

"Krishna Visiting Radha" (Colour Plate IV), attributed to Mola Ram, is one of the most representative works of the Garhwal school and amply displays the school's favourite colours and technique. Garhwali domestic architecture is also illustrated in this painting. One seldom comes across Krishna dressed in such rich apparel and adorned with so many ornaments. The details of Krishna's conventional jewelled crown (*mukut*) are meticulously depicted. The folds of his *pitambar* and its flow are remarkable. Radha has come out to meet him, dressed in a sage-green gown and *chadar* of the same colour, both spotted with golden stars. Her head-cover and *ghunghat* frame her lovely face. The attitude of her arms and hands signifies her complete surrender to Krishna's love. Krishna accepts her surrender, as it were, with outstretched hands. Three maids or *sakhis* of Radha stand at the door, watching the lovers' meeting. It is said that after Krishna went away, the curious *gopis* asked Radha why he was so dark. "My beloved lives night and day in my dark eyes, therefore he is dark," she replied.

"Radha and Krishna under a Canopy" (B. & W. 16, 18) has been a very popular theme with Pahari painters. The scene invariably is in the forest, in a dark stormy night,

with lightning and thunder. The divine lover, Krishna, lavishes his tender care on the timid Radha. He holds her close in an improvised rain-shelter (*ghugi*) or under a tree or an umbrella. The *gopis* run away, leaving the divine lovers alone in the rain. This romantic scene is based on the *Gita Govinda* of Jaidev.

The *Bhagavata Purana* is a treasure-house of Krishna lore. Poets like Jaidev, Vidyapati, Surdas and Nand Das have invoked religious sanction for the love of Krishna and Radha. The artists of the Pahari schools drew inspiration from the romantic literature and painted pictures in terms of Krishna and Radha to provide, as it were, divine sanction for the lapses and love affairs of their patrons, the Pahari Rajas. "Radha and Krishna Reconciled" (Colour Plate VIII) and "Radha and Krishna in a Grove" (Colour Plate IX) are typical specimens of the amorous subjects painted by Garhwal artists.

The artists of the Garhwal school have painted several series of pictures as illustrations to books. Notable among them are the illustrations of *Rukmini Mangal*, *Nala Damayanti*, *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana* and *Kama Sutra*. There are also serial illustrations of the *Dashavatara* (ten incarnations of God), *Ashtadurga* (eight aspects of the goddess Durga) and the *Nava Graha* (nine planets).

RUKMINI MANGAL

Three sets of paintings on the theme of Rukmini's elopement have been painted by the artists of Garhwal. One set of 15 paintings was presented by Tej Ram in 1890 to Badri Datt Joshi of Almora, at the time of his retirement from Garhwal as a Deputy Collector. This set is now with his grandson, Girja Kishore Joshi. The second set was purchased by Raja Kirti Shah of Tehri. The third and the best set was preserved by Balak Ram. Two paintings out of this set were taken by Mr. J. C. French in 1930; and the remaining thirteen were acquired by the present writer from Balak Ram in 1952. Twelve of them are reproduced here (Colour Plates XX-XXXI). Judging from the style and technique, the entire set of these paintings on this romantic episode of Krishna's life appears to be the work of more than one Garhwal artist. The description and likely authorship of the individual paintings in the series are given in the notes.

LOVE OF BIRDS

Chakorpriya and *Morpriya* are also common themes in Garhwal paintings. Mola Ram painted several pictures of girls playing with the *chakor* (the Greek partridge) and *mor* (peacock), all in the same pose. *Morpriya* and *Chakorpriya* (B. & W. 20) and *Balakpriya* (fond of children) and *Mayankmukhi* (the beautiful one, literally the moon-faced one) (B. & W. 21) demonstrate the development of Mola Ram's style. *Mayankmukhi* is a specimen of Mola Ram's style at the fully matured stage. *Morpriya* is the earliest example of this stage, having been painted in 1775, soon after he changed over to the Pahari style. When Mr. J. C. French saw this painting in my collection at my Lansdowne house during his visit in 1930, he remarked that it looked "primitive." He liked it so much that he persuaded me to part with it. This exquisite miniature bears on its top Mola Ram's motto, in verse, to the effect that he preferred sincere appreciation of his art to tons of money and thousands of villages.

PORTRAITS

The primary motive of portrait-making, obviously, is the desire to possess the likeness of heroes, one's friends and loved ones.

In *Govardhan Dharan* (Colour Plate I) the pair of peacocks on the Govardhan mountain are pondering over the plight of the people of Gokul. In *Morpriya* the peacock seems to be lost in adoration of the beautiful, moon-like face of the girl. Jwala Ram (1788-1848) has painted typical Himalayan birds, namely, several hill birds of Garhwal; the *muna* (Himalayan blue and golden pheasants) which is the most beautiful bird of the Himalayas, and is found at 8,000 feet and above; a Tibetan crow; a female finch; and an *angarchari* (fire-eating bird).

Under the patronage of the Mughals the age-old practice of painting flowers received a fresh impetus and developed as a separate branch of painting, along with calligraphy. The Garhwal artists, with their Mughal background, took delight in painting flowering trees.

Exquisite flowers were also painted on the walls of the palaces of princes and the houses of the gentry. I remember very well the flowers and birds such as the red-headed parrot painted on the walls of one of my ancestral houses at Srinagar. It is a great pity that the houses of the artists, the gentry and the royal palaces at Srinagar, which contained frescoes, were all washed away in 1894 by the Gohna flood.

AFTER MOLA RAM

Whatever paintings Mola Ram preserved in his studio started going outside Garhwal after his death. Quite a number of paintings were destroyed and mutilated by the two insane grandsons of Mola Ram. A very large number were either given away or sold by Tej Ram before Balak Ram became conscious of the value of art, heritage. Later he began to collect and preserve the paintings. Some of the paintings were acquired by Raja Kirti Shah (1892-1913) of Tehri-Garhwal and later by his son Maharaja Narendra Shah (1913-1950).

Garhwal paintings also found their way to various museums and collections, such as the Boston Museum, the British Museum, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Bharat Kala Bhavan (Varanasi), Allahabad and Lucknow Museums, the National Museum, New Delhi, the Kasturbhai Lalbhai collection (Ahmedabad), the Ajit Ghose and R. K. Kejriwal collections (Calcutta) and the collections of Brigadier V. D. Jayal and Girja Kishore Joshi.

Before Dr. Coomaraswamy spoke of Garhwal paintings in 1916 in his *Rajput Painting*, the Garhwal school was not recognized or known. And such Garhwal paintings as were found in the Hill States of Punjab were taken as belonging to Kangra and Guler. The most remarkable thing about the Garhwal paintings and drawings which are reproduced here is that they offer material to indicate that the Mughal school of painting evolved into Pahari painting, of which the Garhwal school is a branch. The Garhwal school declined after the death of Mola Ram, the last great artist of Garhwal.

The Rajput princes who came in contact with the Mughal emperors and governors invited Muslim court painters to make portraits of themselves, their courtiers and courtesans. The Hindu artists often painted portraits to please their patrons and to oblige their friends.¹

There is an autographed portrait of a contemporary Minister, Jaidev Vazir, by Mola Ram (B. & W. 12). The Vazir was Chief Minister of Raja Lalit Shah (1772-1780) (B. & W. 22) and Raja Jaikrit Shah (1780-1785). Jaidev is shown riding on a grey horse, accompanied by five attendants, one of them being a *hukkabardar*. The Minister is dressed in the court dress of the time, and the attendants (one of whom is a musician) in the uniform of peons and orderlies. The striped tight pyjamas they wear are still used in Garhwal. They also wear typical Salimshahi shoes which were introduced into Srinagar by Suleman Shikoh in 1658 and are still made by local cobblers in yellow leather.

There are portraits of five Rajas of Garhwal by contemporary artists in the collection of the Maharaja of Tehri-Garhwal. The earliest is that of Raja Fateh Shah who lived for 83 years (1689-1772). It may be either by Hira Lal, father of Mangat Ram, or by Mangat Ram, father of Mola Ram. Fateh Shah rides on a spirited white Tibetan horse, followed by three attendants. A notable portrait by Mola Ram which supplied me one of the reasons for correcting the date of Mola Ram's birth from 1760 to 1743 is that of Raja Lalit Shah (B. & W. 22). Mola Ram himself stands before his patron with folded hands. Another portrait is that of Raja Jaikrit Shah (1780-1785). Yet another is a portrait of Raja Pradyuman Shah (1785-1804) with his younger brother, the prince Prakram Shah, sitting behind him, both in the Maratha dress of the time. Pradyuman Shah was the last ruler of the whole, undivided Garhwal. Mola Ram who was a contemporary of Lalit Shah, Jaikrit Shah and Pradyuman Shah, painted a picture of Pradyuman Shah and his Rani as "Dampati" (B. & W. 11). This is a masterpiece of Mola Ram's. In this painting we find the landmarks of Srinagar (the two hills and the Alaknanda river between them) and the characteristic *chandan tika*. The couple are engaged in a *tele-a-tete* on the balcony of the palace, from where can be seen the Alaknanda river and the two hills of Srinagar. B. & W. 23 is a group portrait (head studies) of ten of Mola Ram's contemporaries and notables of Srinagar. One is Brijlal, at the extreme left corner; next to him is Maluk Puri Mahant; and the third from left is Mani Ram Bairagi, who visited Mola Ram's studio in 1818. Other interesting portraits include those of Jwala Ram, drawn by himself, standing in front of the family goddess, and Mangat Ram's self-portrait with his father Hira Lal (B. & W. 5).

FLORA AND FAUNA

The artists of Garhwal have painted and drawn animals, birds and flowers in various contexts: subjectively; in the paintings of men and women; for purely decorative purposes; and also objectively in landscapes and in individual studies.

Birds are painted most beautifully in paintings such as *Usha Swapna*, *Morpriya*, *Chakorpriya* and *Govardhan Dharan*. In *Usha Swapna* (the dream of Usha) (Colour Plate II) the peacock is stretching its neck to look into the dream of Usha as it were.

¹In my collection there is a sketch book containing 61 drawings by Jwala Ram (1788-1848), son of Mola Ram. The drawings are stated by Jwala Ram to have been made by him for the sake of his friend, Bachua Zargar, in 1834.

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AFTER MOLA RAM

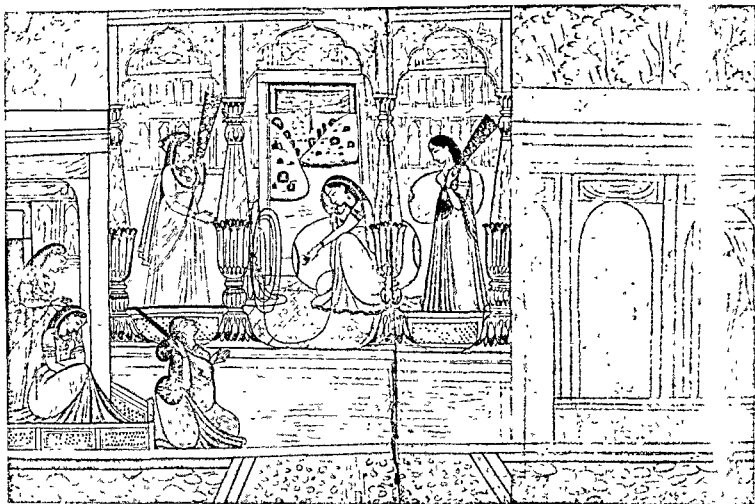
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3. *Prince Salomon Si'ahy*
Garbaal, Shih Ram 1700-1833
11" x 9" Author's Collection





4. *Consoling the Queen*
Garhwal, Mola Ram
15" x 10", Author's Collection

5. *Mangat Ram and Hira Lal*
Garhwal, Mangat Ram
6½" x 5", Author's Collection

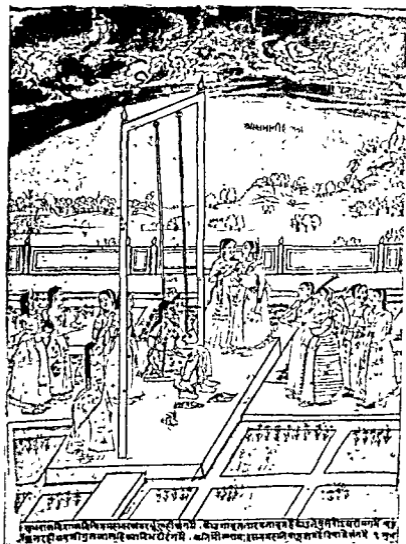


6. *Hardayal Khatri and Mangat Ram*
Garhwal
6½" x 5", Author's Collection



7. *Manini*

Garhwal, Mughal Style, Mola Ram
12" x 9", Author's Collection



9. *Hindola (Swing)*

Garhwal, Mughal Style, Mola Ram
11" x 8", Author's Collection

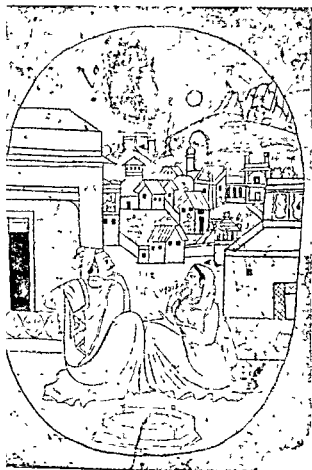
8. *Mastani*

Garhwal, Mughal Style, Mola Ram
8" x 6", Kejrwal's Collection



35. *Krishna and Radha Receiving Homage*

Garhwal c 1800
9" x 7 1/2", Lucknow Museum



37. *The Home-coming*

Garhwal, Mola Ram
9" x 7 1/2", Author's Collection



4
COLOUR PLATES

PLATE I

GOVARDHAN DHARAN
(The Upholding of Mount Govardhan)

Garhwal

Artist—Mola Ram

Size 9 in. × 9 in., Author's Collection

ALTHOUGH the theme is commonplace enough in Pahari painting, this painting is unique in that it has been painted by Mola Ram while he was yet under the Mughal influence.

The lightning, dark clouds and rain can be seen against the very dark background. The central figure is the young Krishna holding the mountain on the little finger of his right hand. His left hand is resting on the head of a frightened cowherd boy. Nand, Krishna's foster-father, to the right, is dressed like a Mughal courtier in *peshvaj* and turban; his beard is also in the style of Mughal aristocrats. Balarama, tall and fair, is standing in front of Krishna. There are four frightened cows and a calf. The two peacocks on the mountain represent the avian world.

This painting illustrates the last phase of the Mughal school in Garhwal painting. The foundation of this style was laid by Sham Das and Har Das, father and son, who were artists at Shahjahan's court. They had come to Srinagar (Garhwal) in the month of May 1658, along with the refugee prince, Suleman Shikoh, son of Dara. Mola Ram, the greatest artist of the Garhwal school of painting, was born in the fourth generation.

The legend of *Govardhan Dharan* as given in the *Bhagavata Purana* tells us about Krishna the Saviour who protected the cowherds and the people of the country round about Mathura against the fury of Indra, the god of rain, by lifting the Mountain Govardhan above their heads as an umbrella. Indra was infuriated because Krishna had persuaded the cowherds to abandon the worship of Indra. Krishna says: "We are dwellers of woods and it is mountains and forests that nourish us. He who nourishes, His worship alone is proper."



PLATE II

KALIYA DAMAN (QUELLING OF KALIYA SERPENT)

Srinagar (Garhwal)

Artist—Mola Ram

Size 8½ in. × 7 in., Author's Collection

THIS painting was discovered in Mola Ram's house and exhibited for the first time by Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy in the All India Exhibition held at Allahabad in 1910. It was also published by him in black and white in *Rajput Painting*, Vol. II. This theme of the quelling of Kaliya serpent has been dealt with by several Pahari and Rajasthani painters.

Krishna is dancing on the hood of the serpent. He is dressed not in his conventional robe and crown but in a short yellow waist cloth to indicate that he had dived into the river to capture the snake which had contaminated the waters of the Yamuna river. In the foreground are five *naginis* (wives of the serpent) with Mola Ram's characteristic horizontal *chandan tika* on their foreheads. They are begging of Krishna not to kill Kaliya, and assuring him that they will leave the river.

Higher up in the picture are depicted two local hills called Nar and Narain which can still be seen at Srinagar (Garhwal). The palaces of the Rajas of Garhwal were situated on the left bank of the river Alaknanda. These palaces were swept away by the Gohna flood in 1894. In the picture, cows and cowherds are painted near the palaces to indicate that the scene is Vrindavan and not Garhwal. This work of Mola Ram is one of those rare Pahari (Garhwal) paintings in which local scenery, depicted symbolically, helps in locating the provenance of the painting.

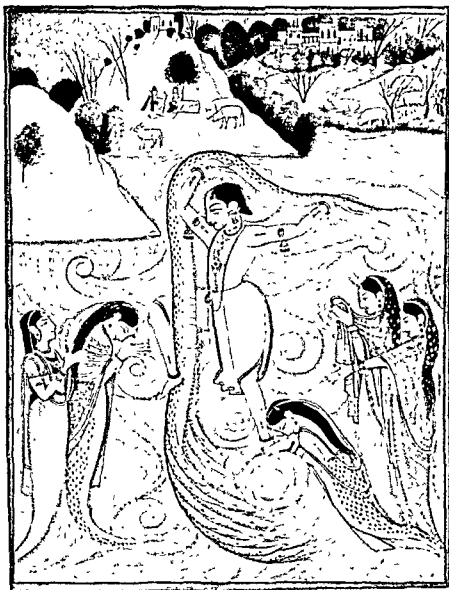


PLATE III

USHA SWAPNA

(The Dream of Usha)

Garhwal

Artist—not known

Size 10½ in. × 9 in., Author's Collection

THIS painting also illustrates a story from the *Bhagavata Purana*. There is a striking beauty about the drapery, ornaments, landscape and the human figures in this very fine specimen of Pahari art. The typical mauve colour of the Garhwal school of painting appears in Usha's drapery. The provenance of the painting is obvious from the yellow cream and white colours, the grey panelling, two hillocks in the background, the palaces of the Rajas, the mango tree and the river Alaknanda.

According to the legend, Banasur, one of the hundred sons of Bali, lived at Bamsu near Kidarnath in Uttarakhand. He had a most beautiful daughter named Usha. One night she had a dream in which she saw a beautiful young man and fell deeply in love with him. The next morning her friend Chitrlekha who was an artist asked her why she looked so disturbed. Usha described to her the dream in which she had seen a dark lotus-eyed youth in a yellow *pitambar*. She described how her beloved in her dream made her drink nectar from his lips but left her before she could fulfil her desire. She told Chitrlekha that she was in an ocean of grief. Chitrlekha resolved to bring back to her the "thief" who had stolen her heart. Chitrlekha then began to paint the portraits of all the princes, gods and *Gandharvas* who approximated Usha's description. At last as she was painting the portrait of Anirudha, the son of Pradyuman of Dwaraka, Usha lowered her eyes bashfully and said, "It is he".

Chitrlekha went to Dwaraka and found Anirudha sleeping soundly in his chamber. She brought him to Bamsu in that position and when he woke up he found himself in an unfamiliar place. When he saw Usha standing before him, he extended his arm towards her, calling her to him. But Usha pretended to go away. This is the moment that the artist has depicted in this painting.



PLATE IV

KRISHNA VISITING RADHA

Garhwal, circa 1800 A.D.

Artist—Mola Ram

Size 10 in. × 7 in., Author's Collection

THE author found this painting in the collection of Rao Virendra Shah, a cousin of Maharaja Narendra Shah of Tehri-Garhwal. The owner had inherited his entire collection from his father, Kunwar Vichitra Shah, who, in his turn, had inherited it from his mother Rajmata Guleria (1886-1892), wife of Raja Pratap Shah (1872-1886). The Rajmata was a great connoisseur of painting and had a large collection of Pahari paintings which she passed on to her favourite son, Vichitra Shah, who was also a lover of art. Many famous Pahari paintings of Kangra, Guler and Garhwal went to various collectors through art dealers from his collection. The painting is attributed to Mola Ram and was selected from the author's collection for exhibition in London at the Royal Academy of Arts Exhibition in 1947-48. It also appears in the catalogue of *The Art of India and Pakistan*, p. 134, No. 570 (740), entitled "Krishna Visiting Radha," attributed to Mola Ram (1743-1833 A.D.), Garhwal, about 1800 A.D.

Krishna is depicted in his traditional yellow *pitambar*. He has his black blanket round his shoulder. Behind him is a flowering *mandar* tree and a mango tree further back. *Mandar* tree is common in Mola Ram's paintings. Radha, dressed in sage-green skirt, is in the foreground. Three of her companions are peering curiously through the door. The dainty houses in the background suggest the hill architecture. A calf and a heifer are sitting lovingly together under a mango tree signifying that their love is more audacious than that of the divine lovers. Radha's eyes are red with crying and Krishna's attitude suggests that there has been either a long separation or a misunderstanding between them.

The poet Bihari has sung of the situation in the following words:

Bal kahe lali bhai loyan koyan manh

Lal tehare dragan ki pari dragan men chhanh

[Krishna asks Radha why her eyes are red and she replies that it was the reflection of Krishna's eyes in her own.]



PLATE V

MANINI RADHA

Garhwal

Artist—not known

Size 10 in. × 8 in., Author's Collection

THIS painting as also Colour Plates VI and VII belongs to the *Manini Radha* Series. Here Krishna is shown going away, having failed in his attempts to pacify the displeased Radha. Radha's companion appears to think that this time she has gone too far in her pride and anger. But Radha is adamant.

Krishna is wearing the cowherd's head-dress and not the conventional crown.

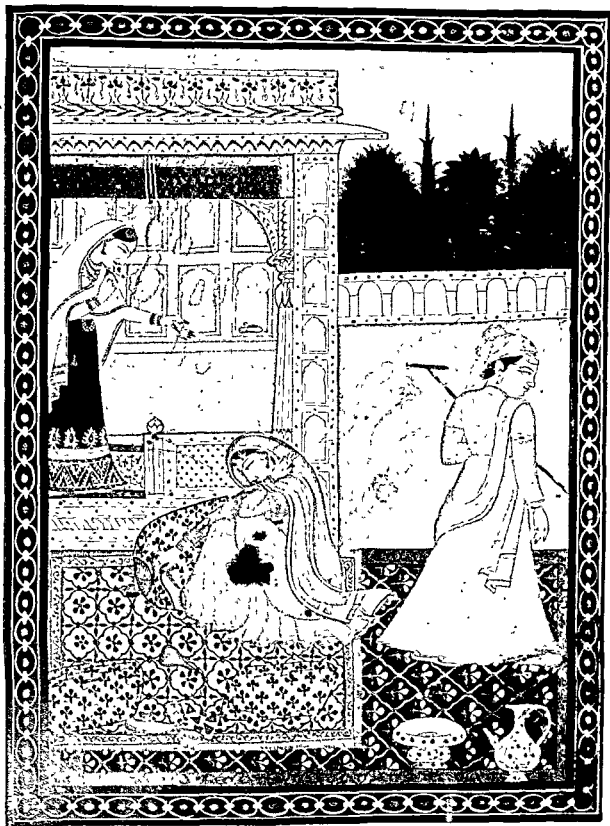


PLATE VI

KRISHNA WASHING RADHA'S FEET

Garhwal, *circa* 1800 A.D.

Artist—Mola Ram

Size 9½ in. × 6½ in., Collection of Brig. V. D. Jayal

THE painting depicts a dejected Radha full of displeasure and jealousy on account of Krishna's dalliance with other cow-girls (*gopis*). She is sitting in her house, attended by an old servant who appears to be consoling and pacifying her. A repentant Krishna is washing her feet and trying to convince her of his complete surrender and devotion to her. The manner in which Radha has covered herself with her veil indicates her protest.

The flowering *mandar* tree and the characteristic screens on the door are recurring motifs in all Mola Ram's works.



PLATE VIII

RADHA AND KRISHNA RECONCILED

Garhwal

Artist—not known

Size 9 in. × 8 in., Allahabad Municipal Museum

THE river Alaknanda and the hillocks in the background, the colour and the characteristic Garhwal technique and motifs indicate that this painting is of the Garhwal school.

Radha and Krishna are seated on a couch, attended by two maid servants. One is fanning them with a *chauri* (yak tail) while the other is seated near Krishna's feet. Three other women attendants are sitting below, talking of the romance of Radha and Krishna. On Radha's forehead appears the *chandan tika*, the distinguishing mark of the Garhwal school of painting.



PLATE IX

RADHA AND KRISHNA IN A GROVE

Garhwal

Artist—Mola Ram

Size 8½ in. × 8½ in., Author's Collection

THE original painting is four inches wider. The extreme left side has been omitted in this reproduction. The painting depicts Radha and Krishna dallying in a beautiful grove. Placing of the decorative trees, the mango and *mandar* usually painted by Mola Ram, is masterly. The cowherds to the right appear to be talking of the scene in the grove on which they have turned their backs. The landscape is typical of Garhwal painting. The composition shows perfect balance and the colour scheme is enchanting.



PLATE X

KRISHNA WATCHING RADHA FROM THE GARDEN

Garhwal, circa 1800 A.D.

Artist—not known

Size 9½ in. × 6½ in., Collection of Brig. V. D. Jayal

IT is conjectured that this painting is the work of Chaitu or Manku or Mola Ram. This Plate and Plate VI are fine and typical specimens of Garhwal painting and were originally collected by Brig. Jayal's father, Dewan Chakradhar, at Tehri-Garhwal from Kunwar Vichitra Shah, uncle of Maharaja Narendra Shah.

Krishna is watching Radha from behind the flowering trees and plantains and admiring her beauty. Radha is standing on the terrace with a companion. It is a charming painting conveying the sentiment of love.



PLATE XI
THE TOILET OF A QUEEN

Garhwal

Artist—Mola Ram

Size 10 in. × 7½ in., Author's Collection

THIS painting is one of Mola Ram's earliest compositions. Neither the colours nor his style seems to be mature in this work. Here four maid servants are shown attending on their mistress. The queen appears unhappy. Possibly she has lost all hopes on account of the appearance of a young and more beautiful rival, and is, therefore, indifferent to her looks. All the five women shown in the picture appear listless. In the river and on its bank in the background are ducks, cranes and *chakor*. Below, in the garden fount are lotuses and ducks. The scene appears to be the terrace of the royal palace at Srinagar (Garhwal).



PLATE XII

THE BRIDE

Garhwal

Artist—Mola Ram

Size 10 in. × 8 in., Author's Collection

HERE Mola Ram depicts *Navodha* (a newly married bride) being led to the bridal chamber by the maid. This painting is also one of the artist's earliest attempts and was not completed in colour by him. However, the *mandar* tree so characteristic of his paintings appears in this painting also.

The bridegroom appears at the window waiting for his beloved with great anxiety, joy and hope. The bride's expression shows fear, hesitation and love.

Shringar-rasa poetry in Hindi classifies brides into six categories. The bride depicted here belongs to the category known as *Madhya Navodha nayika*, i.e. the woman who is shy and at the same time passionately anxious to meet her lover.



PLATE XIII
MATSYAVATAR
(Fish Incarnation)

Garhwal
Artist—Mola Ram
Size 13 in. × 10 in., Author's Collection

THIS painting illustrates a legend of the *Bhagavata* and the *Matsya Purana*, according to which there was a deluge and the ocean engulfed the universe. Vishnu the Supreme Power advised King Satyavrat to take into a boat the seeds of all plants, the *rishis* and Brahma. Brahma was holding the four Vedas in his mouth. It so happened that Brahma fell asleep and the horse-headed demon Haygriv took away the Vedas. The *rishis* and the gods implored Vishnu to rescue the Vedas from the demon. It was then that Vishnu incarnated himself as a monster-fish, killed the demon and rescued the Vedas.

In the painting the ocean is represented by violent surging waves. The monster-fish with fangs can be seen in the ocean. Vishnu is emerging from the waters in human form through the mouth of the monster-fish. He is richly dressed in conventional attire and wears a crown studded with precious stones and ornaments, and is holding the four Vedas he has salvaged in each of his four hands. *Rishis* and gods are thanking him for the merciful act.

Some art critics think that this painting is of the Kangra school.



PLATE XIV
NARSINGH AVATAR
(Lion Incarnation)

Garhwal
Artist—Mola Ram
Size 10 in. × 9 in., Author's Collection

THIS painting is based on a legend from the *Bhagavata Purana*. The demon Hiranyakashipu had a boon from Brahma that he could not be killed by any human being, or animal, or god; that he could not be killed during the day or the night; that he could not be killed on the earth or in the sky; that he could not be killed by a weapon; and that he could not be killed either out of the house or inside it. With such a boon he began to consider himself immortal. He began to oppress and ill-treat pious and religious people. He tortured his son Prahlad because he persisted in worshipping Vishnu. To save his devotee Prahlad, Vishnu incarnated himself as a man-lion, a new being as had never existed before, with the face and head of a lion and the body of a man. Vishnu annihilated Hiranyakashipu at dusk on the threshold of his house by tearing open his stomach with his claws thereby avoiding all the terms of Brahma's boon.

The figures of Prahlad and his mother are strikingly beautiful. Her tall, beautiful figure is draped in a *lahanga* (skirt), bodice and veil. Mola Ram's characteristic *chandan tika* adorns her forehead. The large almond-shaped eyes are set off by the ear-rings and other ornaments. Prahlad is wearing the Mughal court dress. He is holding a religious book in his right arm and praying that his father's life may be spared. His father Hiranyakashipu's shield and sword are lying by his side. The grey wooden panelling that so often forms the background of Mola Ram's paintings is also distinctive. In the original there is a descriptive inscription on the top of the painting.



PLATE XV

VIPRALABDHA NAYIKA

Garhwal, circa 1800 A.D.

Artist—Mola Ram

Size 9 in. × 7 in., Author's Collection

THE original sketch of this painting was discovered by the author amongst Mola Ram's papers at Srinagar, Garhwal, in 1954. It bears Mola Ram's name and a verse describing *Vipralabdha nayika*, which runs as follows:

"When the *Vipralabdha nayika*, having completed her toilet and decorated her person with ornaments, came to the tryst in the moonlight to meet her beloved, and when he did not come at the appointed time, she suffered the pangs of separation. The moonlight began to burn her like the hot sun of the hottest month. She asked herself of what use her ornaments were when the lover had not come to see her! She took off her jewels one by one and threw them away."

In the painting the *nayika* is standing on a bed of green leaves under a mango tree, waiting for her lover. In front of her is a *mandar* tree with its pinkish flowers. The ornaments which she has thrown are lying on the ground.

This painting was acquired by the author at Tehri-Garhwal.



PLATE XVI
THE TEMPTATION OF SHIVA

Garhwal
Artist—Mola Ram
Size 10 in. × 7½ in., Author's Collection

SHIVA is shown sitting cross-legged on a leopard skin, his hands resting on his thighs, in an attitude of deep contemplation. Shiva's hair standing up, flame-like, indicates his anger at being disturbed by Parvati. Mola Ram's characteristic *chandan tika* adorns her forehead. She is playing on a stringed instrument to charm Shiva and win him over. The mood of Parvati is reflected also in water birds, the green turf, lotus flowers and the giant mango trees with Mola Ram's favourite flowering *mandar* trees leaning against them.

This painting is remarkable for the characteristic foliage and flowering trees of the Garhwal school of painting. The landscape, though conventional, is perfectly balanced.

The sketch of this painting (B. & W. 15) was found by the author at Mola Ram's house in 1954. This conclusively proves that Mola Ram was the painter of this picture.



PLATE XVII

BALARAMA DRAWING WATER FOR KRISHNA

Garhwal

Artist—Mola Ram

Size 9½ in. × 7 in., Author's Collection

THE green slope of the hill forms a pleasing background in this painting. Balarama draws water out of a rocky hill with his plough. Radha is offering the water to Krishna in a *lota*. There are two mango trees and (against the rock) a flowering *mandar*. Mola Ram's *chandan tika* is on Radha's forehead.

It is an interesting coincidence that in Tehri-Garhwal at a place called Kuwa on the bank of the Yamuna there is a bare perpendicular rocky hill similar to the one shown in this painting. A large volume of water oozes out of the base of this hill and joins the waters of the Yamuna. There is no obvious or visible source for this stream but, according to the local people, it comes from the Ganga, which is on the other side of the hill, to meet the Yamuna.

Black and White painting No. 33 is another version of this legend in which the Ganga, depicted as a woman, is emerging out of the rock, holding a jar in her hand.

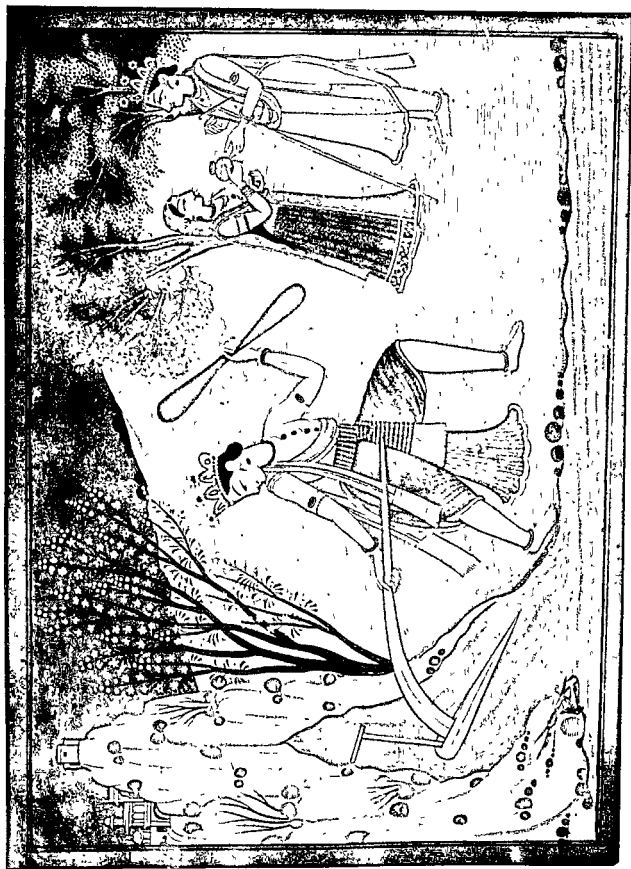


PLATE XVIII

AGATPATIKA NAYIKA

Garhwal

Artist—not known

Size 10½ in. × 8 in., Author's Collection

IN *Nayika* literature, *Agatpatika* is described as “she whose husband is returning home after a long absence in a foreign land.” Mati Ram, a great Hindi poet, has described her as one who stands at the door waiting for the home-coming of her husband.

This painting depicts a number of scenes from the situation of *Agatpatika nayika*. In the top left hand corner, the *nayika* is attending to her toilet. She is being assisted by three maids, one of whom holds a tray of cosmetics. The second is passing these on to her mistress while the third fans her from behind. The *nayika* herself scrutinizes her face in a looking-glass. In another scene a maid is making the bed. Lower down on the left, two maids are putting up a curtain (*kanat*).

In the distant background are two hillocks and the Alaknanda river at Srinagar (Garhwal). On the bank of the river a traveller is riding towards the town on a horse. Below, at the gateway of the city, stands a guard. A man is going down the street with the traveller's luggage on his head while a woman shows him the way. The *nayika* is standing at the door of her house with her arms resting on the door frame and looking eagerly towards the direction from which her husband is expected to come.

This painting is a fine piece of art and gives an idea of domestic architecture in the eighteenth century.



PLATE XIX

AKBAR AT A VILLAGE WELL

Srinagar (Garhwal), circa 1770 A.D.

Artist—Mola Ram

Size 12 in. x 9 in., Author's Collection

THE painting depicts the young Akbar quenching his thirst at a village well after a hunting expedition. This painting belongs to the early phase in Mola Ram's career when he was still painting in the Mughal style and had not yet taken to the Pahari-Rajput style.

The palaces of the Garhwal Rajas on the bank of the river Alaknanda form the background. A mango tree is also part of the landscape. The village women are draped in Rajasthani costume. Two of them appear to admire the scene while the one drawing water from the well appears to be wondering whether the young man was really thirsty.



PLATE XX

RUKMINI'S LETTER TO KRISHNA

[Colour Plates XX-XXXI form a series of 12 paintings of *Rukmini Mangal* or the Marriage of Rukmini.]

Garhwal, *circa* 1800 A.D.

Artist—probably Mola Ram

Size 12 in. × 9 in., Author's Collection

RUKMINI had fallen deeply in love with Krishna without seeing him. When she heard that her brother Rukma had arranged her marriage with Shishupal, she sent a Brahmin messenger with her letter to Dwaraka to seek Krishna's intervention. In the letter she had suggested that Krishna should take her away from the temple where she would go to worship the family goddess just before the proposed marriage.

Krishna, King of Dwaraka, is seated on a throne, holding Rukmini's love letter in his left hand. The Brahmin messenger with folded hands is pleading with him on behalf of Rukmini. The *dwarpal* (gate-keeper) on the right is dressed in Mughal style.

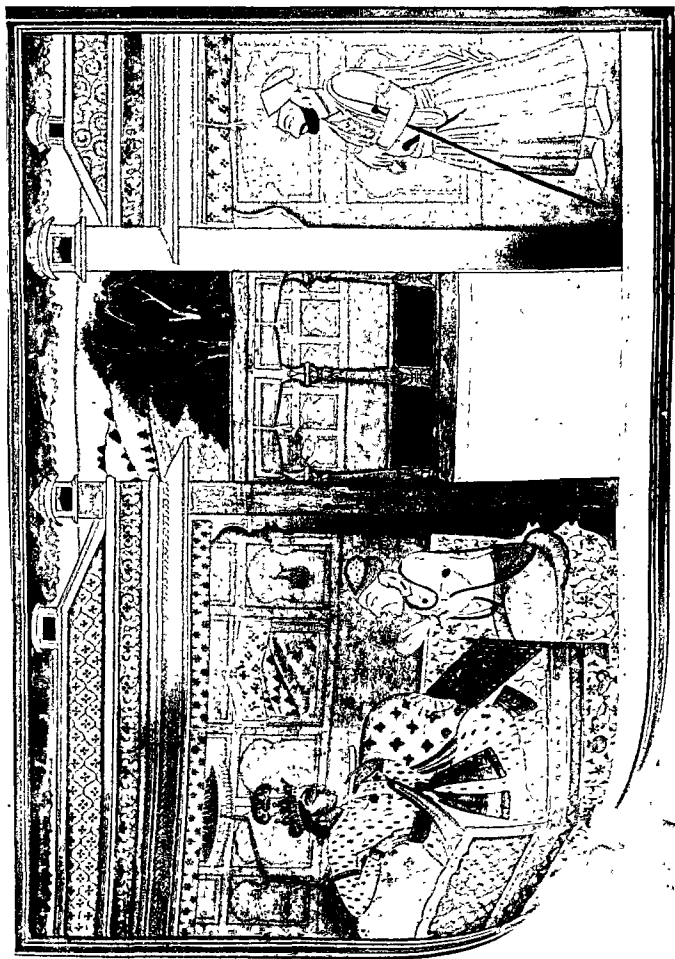


PLATE XXI

KRISHNA CONFERS WITH BALARAMA

Garhwal

Artist—Mola Ram

Size $11\frac{1}{2}$ in. \times 8 in., Author's Collection

KRISHNA and Balarama sit in a *pandal* discussing plans for the marriage of Rukmini. Four other Yadavas are seated in the *pandal* and there are four attendants standing. On either side there are flowering *mandar* and mango trees. The colour scheme of the dress is striking and has the characteristic colours of the Garhwal paintings, viz., orange-red, scarlet, cream, golden yellow, mauve, light green, blue and white. In the background are white houses, with towers and minarets. Women are watching from windows and balconies the conference in which Rukmini's fate is being decided.

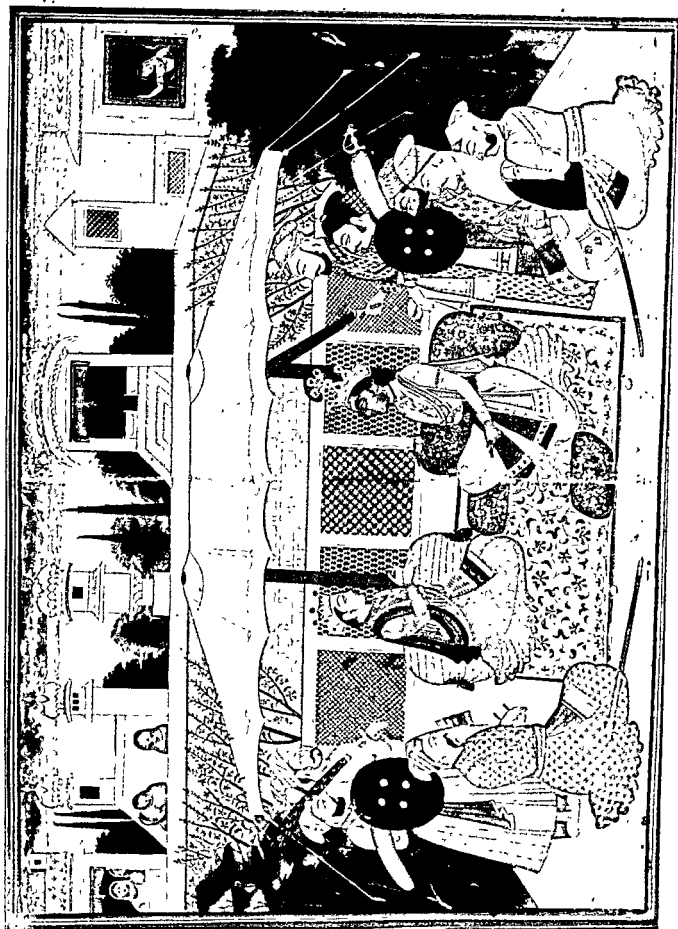


PLATE XXII
KRISHNA LEAVES DWARAKA

Garhwal
Artist—not known
Size 11 in. × 8 in., Author's Collection

THE painting shows Krishna leaving Dwaraka in a chariot for Kundinapura. He appears to be discussing with Rukmini's messenger the plan for elopement. The dresses are the same as in the first painting of the series. On Krishna's red banner is a figure of Hanuman.



PLATE XXIII
KRISHNA'S MESSAGE TO RUKMINI

Garhwal
Artist—Mola Ram
Size 11 in. × 8½ in., Author's Collection

RUKMINI's messenger assures her that Krishna is arriving to rescue her from the proposed marriage to Shishupal and take her away. That Mola Ram was the author of this painting is strongly suggested by some of his characteristic motifs, for instance, flowering *mandar* and mango trees used for decorative purposes and the *chandan tika* on Rukmini's forehead.

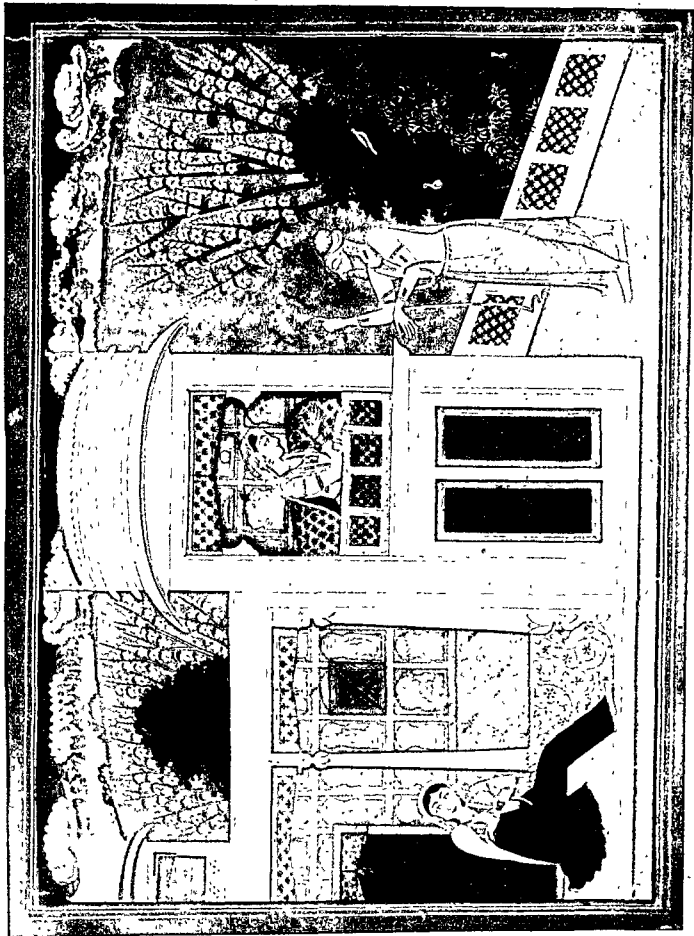


PLATE XXIV

SHISHUPAL'S PARTY ARRIVES AT KUNDINAPURA

Garhwal

Artist—not known

Size 11 in. × 8 in., Author's Collection

RUKMINI's eldest brother Rukma welcomes Shishupal's party and leads it to Kundinapura. Rukma is on an almond-colour horse while Shishupal and one of his companions are on grey mares.



PLATE XXV

SHISHUPAL IMPEACHES RUKMINI'S FATHER

Garhwal

Artist—not known

Size 11½ in. × 8 in., Author's Collection

ON his arrival in Kundinapura Shishupal discovered that Krishna had also come to marry Rukmini. He went to Rukmini's father, Bhism, King of Vidarbha (Berar), and accused him of playing a double game. The painting depicts Shishupal in an agitated mood. One of his friends is supporting him in his arguments.

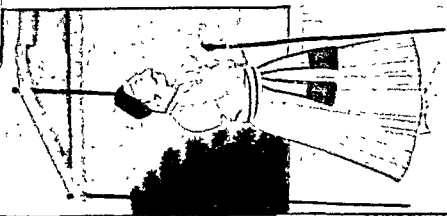
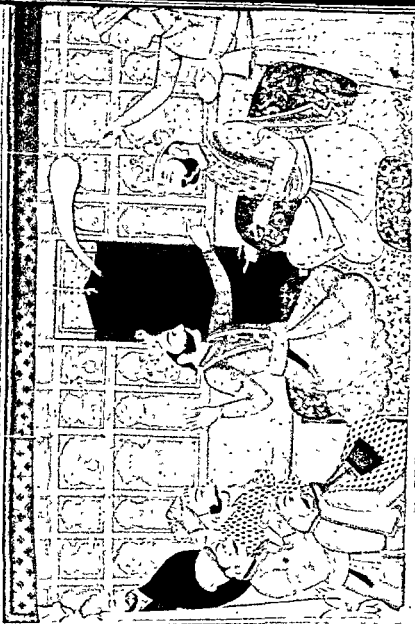


PLATE XXVI

RUKMINI GOES TO THE TEMPLE

Garhwal

Artist—Mola Ram

Size 11½ in. × 8½ in., Author's Collection

RUKMINI goes to the temple of Durga, the family goddess, attended by her maids and bodyguards. The colours used are characteristic of the Garhwal school of painting and particularly of Mola Ram's paintings. The men look apprehensive of some trouble. Rukmini is richly dressed ready for elopement with her beloved Krishna.

The horizontal *chandan tika* which appears frequently in Mola Ram's paintings is visible on Rukmini's forehead.

This is one of the most beautiful paintings in the series.



PLATE XXVII

THE BATTLE BETWEEN BALARAMA'S AND SHISHUPAL'S FORCES

Garhwal

Artist—not known

Size 11½ in. × 8½ in., Author's Collection

WHEN Krishna took Rukmini away from the temple of the goddess Durga, Shishupal, the aggrieved bridegroom, chased him.

Here Balarama who commanded the Yadava forces is seen riding an elephant. It is an extraordinarily realistic and animated battle scene where both the infantry and the cavalry are fighting desperately.



PLATE XXVIII
KRISHNA AND RUKMA FACE EACH OTHER

Garhwal

Artist—not known

Size 11½ in. × 8½ in., Author's Collection

AFTER the defeat of Shishupal, Rukmini's brother, Rukma, chases Krishna, on a chariot. The painting depicts the two facing each other. Krishna is dressed in golden robes. Rukmini is sitting behind Krishna. Krishna is shooting arrows at Rukma. Rukma's arrows are breaking into pieces and are falling on the ground against the onslaught of Krishna.



PLATE XXIX
RUKMINI IMPLORING KRISHNA

Garhwal
Artist—not known
Size 11½ in. × 8½ in., Author's Collection

BOTH the horses of Rukma have been killed and he himself is falling off the chariot. Krishna with a sword in his hand is looking at Rukmini who is touching his feet, begging of him to spare her brother's life.

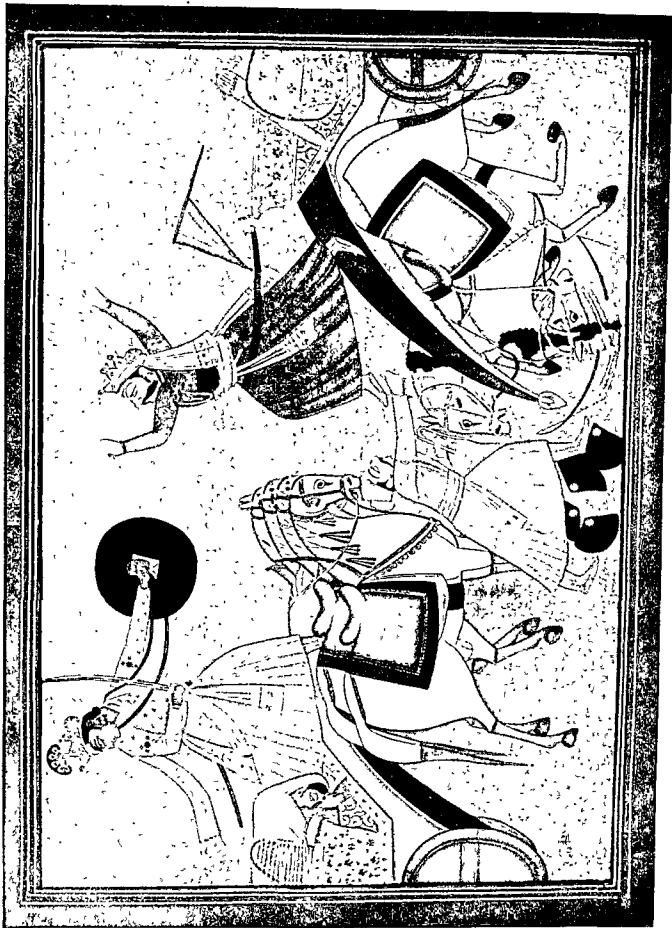


PLATE XXX
RUKMA IS TAKEN PRISONER

Garhwal
Artist—not known
Size 11½ in. × 8¾ in., Author's Collection

THE facial expression of Rukmini shows her relief that her brother's life had been spared. Rukma was taken prisoner. The shaving of his head and moustache signifies defeat and disgrace. Here one of the Yadavas presents him to Balarama who has appeared on the scene, on an elephant, after having defeated Shishupal's army. He is attended by a mahout and one other follower. Krishna is seated in his chariot.



PLATE XXXI

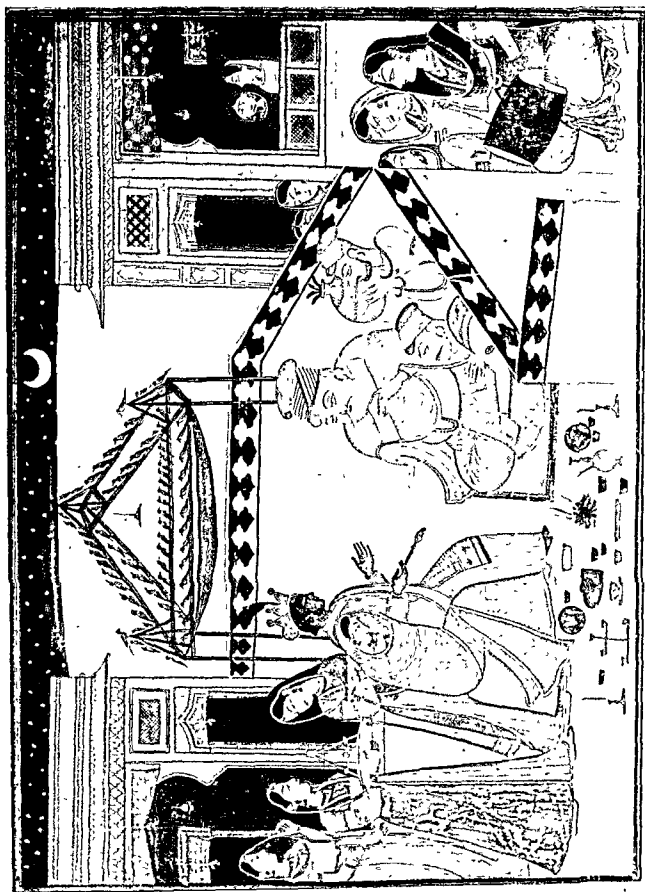
THE MARRIAGE OF RUKMINI AND KRISHNA

Garhwal

Artist—not known

Size 11 in. × 8½ in., Author's Collection

THIS is the last of a series of 12 paintings known as *Rukmini Mangal* collection. The painting shows the ceremonial canopy of the traditional Hindu marriage. A *pundit* (priest) is presiding over the ceremony. To the right women singers and musicians with a *dholak* (drum) are singing nuptial songs. The tall bridegroom and the shy bride are sitting side by side for the marriage ceremony. Behind them are the maids in attendance. The priest also has two Brahmin assistants.



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